

January 10, 2006

Aloha,

My name is Regina C. Quimpo, and I am in my 13<sup>th</sup> year of employment here at the Waimanalo Health Center (WHC.) Presently, I am the Eligibility Worker; I have also held the Medical Receptionist/Front Office and Medical Records positions. I met Kawahine Kamakea-Ohelo (KKO) in 1990, when I was employed at Pope Elementary School as a Special Education (SPED) Parent Facilitator of the Pihana Na Mamo Program. I remember KKO ran for President of the PTA but she was not elected, the word was that the Principal fixed the election and another mother won. The reason I bring this up is that the Principal wouldn't allow KKO to be President of the PTA for we, as parents, knew she would be a "champion" for parents at the school! KKO understood the hardships that local families endure in the educational system.

In my second year as SPED Parent Facilitator, I would find myself escorted off the property and told never to set foot on Pope School property by the Principal and Master Teacher Landgraf. You see, I dared to try to empower the Special Ed Parents by setting up a Parent Room and holding workshops etc. for them. Apparently the parent component of the grant was meant to look good on paper. I had 'the nerve!' to request funds for my workshops/activities Pihana Na Mamo program. I was told by the Principal and Master Teacher, my component had NO funding. I had to use my meager part-time pay to fund parent activities. In my 2<sup>nd</sup> year, I requested medical leave for necessary major surgery (*brought on by stress in that hostile work environment, teachers and janitors were instructed by the Principal not to associate with me—my Parent Room was reduced to a Parent "Corner"*) they both told me I would have no job after surgery. I reported them to the SPED Project Director Hanohano, but my plight and those of the other SPED Parent Facilitators in Big Isle, Kauai, Maui (being mistreated also,) but our pleas were ignored. To this day, I have SPED parents who remember and still thank me for my efforts as a SPED Parent Facilitator.

After my surgery in 1992, I recuperated 2 months; then, I signed up for WorkHawaii training in the University of Hawaii – Kapiolani Community College's Medical Transcription Program. It was an accelerated course—we would earn our certificate in 6 months which would have normally taken us 2 years. I earned my certificate, but couldn't find a job for 6 months. My teacher advised me to at least find a position in a medical office to utilize my skills. My husband saw the ad for Waimanalo Health Center needing a Reception/Front Office position. I had not realized that KKO was the Executive Director until my interview. I had applied for the position and a month later I was hired.

My husband at that time worked for the State as an "emergency hire"—no benefits. I knew we had hard times ahead because his job was on a day-to-day basis! Eventually he'd leave that job due to the Supervisor and co-workers dealing drugs at work that he refused to take part in. His health is poor, and I am so grateful that I can provide for him. When KKO hired me, I attained my goal of a full-time job with benefits to take care of my husband and 2 sons who were 13 and 17 years old at that time. They are now 26 and 30 years old now. I have a daughter-in-law and my grandson is 5 years old! KKO gave me the opportunity to be a good provider/breadwinner for my family. I would meet doctors, kumus, lawyers, senators, representatives, executive directors, finance directors, people from all walks of life even Navajo and Pima Indians! All interested in sharing, educating, contributing, and improving our people in Hawaii nei's health/lifestyle.

KKO as a leader is strong, and fearless. As Executive Director, she made sure we had the best medical coverage (we still do!) we even have matching funds for our 401k. She encouraged all of us to have pride, courage to lead, appreciate, care for our community, our families, ourselves---so many *ikaikawahines*---that I've met! I learned from our revered Kupuna, the late Lydia Hale, that WHC was founded on the scripture, "*Beloved, it is my wish that thou prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*" --3 John vs.2 It took courage, determination, compassion, and commitment to start WHC and to offer health services to people who wouldn't have any access to health care services. Meeting KKO and being a part of WHC has enriched my life and made me a better person. I still believe in the mission and the vision, and do my best to carry on to this day. Mahalo.

*"Whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition,  
To know that even one life breathed easier because you lived: This is to have succeeded."*  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

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